

Docket No. AT9-99-287

**A METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PERFORMING RASTER OPERATIONS IN  
A DATA PROCESSING SYSTEM**

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

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**1. Technical Field:**

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The present invention relates generally to an improved data processing system and, in particular, to an improved method and apparatus for processing graphics data. Still more particularly, the present invention relates to a method and apparatus for performing raster operations in a data processing system.

**2. Description of Related Art:**

15 As the monitors connected to computers become larger and faster the performance of the graphics subsystem must also be improved. It is not uncommon on PCs to find 19, 20 or 21 inch monitors capable of displaying images with 1200 x 1600 resolution (that is, 1200 scan lines vertically by 1600 picture elements, or pels, horizontally for each scan line) with refresh rates up to 85 Hz. The bitmap images manipulated by the processor are stored in main memory and must be transferred to the video memory on the graphics controller board. This transfer must be made as fast as possible.

20 At the heart of every graphical programming interface (GPI) is the concept of a raster operation (ROP). These raster operations are typically defined using 256 different combinations of logical operations performed on the source, pattern, and destination images to produce a new destination image. These operations are usually performed one picture element (pel) at a

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time. Previously, performance problems have been identified with accessing video memory. Previous solutions have focused on reducing the number of instructions used to perform various graphic operations.

10 recognized that when both source and destination images  
involved in the raster operation exist in video memory,  
severe performance problems can be experienced due to the  
overhead of repeatedly switching the input/output (I/O)  
bus from input to output and back. Therefore, it

15 would be advantageous to have an improved method and  
apparatus for performing raster operations.

Docket No. AT9-99-287

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention provides a method and  
apparatus in a data processing system for performing a  
raster operation of graphics data. A system memory and a  
video memory is included in the data processing system.  
The system memory and the video memory are connected by a  
bus wherein the graphics data is organized into picture  
elements. A plurality of picture elements is read from  
10 the system memory. A plurality of picture elements is  
read from the video memory. A raster operation is  
performed on the plurality of picture elements to form a  
plurality of processed picture elements. The plurality of  
processed picture elements is written to the video  
15 memory.

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself, however, as well as a preferred mode of use, further objectives and advantages thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in  
10 conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

**Figure 1** is a pictorial representation depicting a data processing system in which the present invention may be implemented in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

15 **Figure 2** is a block diagram illustrating a data processing system in which the present invention may be implemented;

**Figure 3** is a block diagram illustrating graphical subsystem layers and system resources used in processing  
20 raster operations depicted in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

**Figure 4** is a diagram illustrating common raster operations depicted in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

25 **Figure 5** is a flowchart of a known process for carrying out raster operations ;

**Figure 6** is a flowchart of a process for performing a raster operation one scan line at a time, in which pels are written to video memory one scan line at a time,  
30 depicted in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

**Figure 7** is a flowchart of a process for performing

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

raster operations one scan line at a time, in which pels are written to video memory one pel at a time, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

# DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference now to the figures and in particular with reference to **Figure 1**, a pictorial representation depicting a data processing system in which the present invention may be implemented in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. A personal computer 100 is depicted which includes a system unit 110, a video display terminal 102, a keyboard 104, storage devices 108, which may include floppy drives and other types of permanent and removable storage media, and mouse 106. Additional input devices may be included with personal computer 100. Personal computer 100 can be implemented using any suitable computer, such as an IBM Aptiva™ computer, a product of International Business Machines Corporation, located in Armonk, New York. Although the depicted representation shows a personal computer, other embodiment of the present invention may be implemented in other types of data processing systems, such as network computers, Web based television set top boxes, Internet appliances, etc. Computer 100 also preferably includes a graphical user interface that may be implemented by means of systems software residing in computer readable media in operation within computer 100.

With reference now to **Figure 2**, a block diagram illustrates a data processing system in which the present invention may be implemented. Data processing system 200 is an example of a computer, such as computer 100 in **Figure 1**, in which code or instructions implementing the processes of the present invention may be located. Data processing system 200 employs a peripheral component

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

interconnect (PCI) local bus architecture. Although the depicted example employs a PCI bus, other bus architectures such as Micro Channel and Industry Standard Architecture (ISA) may be used. Processor 202 and main  
5 memory 204 are connected to PCI local bus 206 through PCI bridge 208. PCI bridge 208 also may include an integrated memory controller and cache memory for processor 202.

Additional connections to PCI local bus 206 may be made through direct component interconnection or through  
10 add-in boards. In the depicted example, local area network (LAN) adapter 210, small computer system interface SCSI host bus adapter 212, and expansion bus interface 214 are connected to PCI local bus 206 by direct component connection. In contrast, audio adapter 216, graphics  
15 adapter 218, and audio/video adapter 219 are connected to PCI local bus 206 by add-in boards inserted into expansion slots. Expansion bus interface 214 provides a connection for a keyboard and mouse adapter 220, modem 222, and additional memory 224. SCSI host bus adapter 212 provides  
20 a connection for hard disk drive 226, tape drive 228, and CD-ROM drive 230. Typical PCI local bus implementations will support three or four PCI expansion slots or add-in connectors.

An operating system runs on processor 202 and is used  
25 to coordinate and provide control of various components within data processing system 200 in Figure 2. The operating system may be a commercially available operating system such as OS/2, which is available from International Business Machines Corporation. "OS/2" is a trademark of  
30 International Business Machines Corporation. An object oriented programming system such as Java may run in

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

conjunction with the operating system and provides calls to the operating system from Java programs or applications executing on data processing system 200. "Java" is a trademark of Sun Microsystems, Inc. Instructions for the operating system, the object-oriented operating system, and applications or programs are located on storage devices, such as hard disk drive 226, and may be loaded into main memory 204 for execution by processor 202.

Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the hardware in **Figure 2** may vary depending on the implementation. Other internal hardware or peripheral devices, such as flash ROM (or equivalent nonvolatile memory) or optical disk drives and the like, may be used in addition to or in place of the hardware depicted in **Figure 2**. Also, the processes of the present invention may be applied to a multiprocessor data processing system.

For example, data processing system 200, if optionally configured as a network computer, may not include SCSI host bus adapter 212, hard disk drive 226, tape drive 228, and CD-ROM 230, as noted by dotted line 232 in **Figure 2** denoting optional inclusion. In that case, the computer, to be properly called a client computer, must include some type of network communication interface, such as LAN adapter 210, modem 222, or the like. As another example, data processing system 200 may be a stand-alone system configured to be bootable without relying on some type of network communication interface, whether or not data processing system 200 comprises some type of network communication interface. As a further example, data processing system 200 may be a Personal

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Digital Assistant (PDA) device which is configured with ROM and/or flash ROM in order to provide non-volatile memory for storing operating system files and/or user-generated data.

10 system 200 also may be a kiosk or a Web appliance.

20 memory 310, video memory 312, and video adapter 314.

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30  perform a function, video driver 308 will call graphics
    engine 306 to perform the function.  In other words,

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

graphics engine 306 performs common functions without regard to the particular hardware while video driver 308 performs specific functions. In these examples, system memory 310 may be implemented using main memory 204 in 5 **Figure 2**, while video memory 312 may be located within graphics adapter 218 in **Figure 2**. Video adapter 314 also may be implemented using graphics adapter 218 in **Figure 2**.

In this example, graphical user interface 304 is 10 able to access system memory 310, but not video memory 312 or video adapter 314. Graphics engine 306 has an ability to access system memory 310 and video memory 312. Video driver 308 has the ability to access system memory 310, video memory 312, and video adapter 314. In 15 particular, video driver 308 accesses a processor located on video adapter 314.

In previous systems, graphics engine 306 would obtain a pel from system memory 310 and a pel from video memory 312. This information is stored in a register and 20 a logical OR function is performed on the pel with the result then being returned to video memory 312. As can be seen, a read and a write operation is required for each pel that is processed. This read and write operation for each pel results in the direction of data 25 transfer on the bus to the video memory being changed twice for each pel that is processed. Such a repeated change in direction of data transfer results in performance degradation in graphics processing, which was previously unrecognized by the prior art. The present 30 invention recognizes that performance degradation occurs with changing the direction of data transfer for each pel

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

when performing graphics processing, such as raster operations.

To understand this problem, it is helpful to examine some particular cases. When raster operation is performed updating the video memory without regard to the current state of the video memory, then no performance problems occur. This situation is present because the I/O bus connecting the video memory to the system is always sending data in one direction. The raster operation "src -> dst" is an example of a single direction data transfer. With this raster operation, each pel is read from the source bitmap (src) in system memory and written to the corresponding pel in the destination bitmap (dst) in video memory. The transfer of data is strictly unidirectional from the system memory to the video memory.

However, if the raster operation is "src OR dst -> dst", each pel written to the destination bitmap in video memory is constructed by performing a logical OR operation on pels read from both the source bitmap in system memory and the destination bitmap in video memory.

In existing systems, this operation is performed one pel at a time. This type of operation incurs a bus turnaround delay twice for every pel. In other words, the current value of the pel in the video memory must be sent to the processor (input direction) and ORed with the current value in system memory. This resultant value is then sent from the system memory to the video memory (output direction). A delay is involved every time the I/O bus has to change direction and this occurs twice per pel. In these circumstances, significant performance degradation is present.

Docket No. AT9-99-287

5 The present invention solves this problem by  
providing a method, apparatus, and instructions for  
faster raster operations. The processes of the present  
invention may be applied to a raster, which is a regular  
pattern of lines. On a video display, the raster  
operations are performed in which the number of changes  
in the direction in which data transfer occurs is  
minimized. Raster operations are methods of generating  
graphics that treat an image as a collection of small  
10 independently controlled dots, such as pixels or picture  
elements, which may be arranged in rows and columns.  
This increased performance is provided by a mechanism in  
which a block of pels, such as, for example, a scan line,  
is read from video memory 312 into a buffer in system  
15 memory 310. Another scan line is placed into a buffer in  
system memory 310. At this time, a logical OR operation  
is performed. This operation may be a pel at the time  
with each pel being returned to video memory 312 as the  
logical OR operation is performed.

20 Alternatively, an entire block of information may be  
logically ORed prior to returning the information to  
video memory 312. This transfer of data may be made  
using, for example, a bit block transfer, which is a  
mechanism to manipulate blocks of bits and memory that  
25 represent color and other attributes of a rectangular  
block of pixels forming a screen image. In this manner,  
successive changes in the direction of data flow on the  
bus are not required for each pel. Instead, the change  
in direction may be made for a group of pels, such as a  
30 scan line.

In the depicted examples, the processes are

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

illustrated as being located within graphics engine 306, since graphics accelerations would be controlled by the video driver.

With reference now to **Figure 4**, a diagram of common raster operations is depicted in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. These raster operations in table 400 are examples of operations that may be performed by graphics engine 306. For simplicity, this table contains only those raster operations involving only source and destination images. Raster operations are typically defined as 256 different combinations of logical operations performed on the source, pattern, and destination images to produce a new destination image. Table 400 in **Figure 4** illustrates a partial list of these operations. Operations requiring knowledge of the current contents of the video memory to calculate the bit map for the next screen is of particular interest with respect to performance. For example, operation OR is an operation in which each pel from a source is logically ORred with a pel from a destination with the result being written to a destination bit map in video memory. The pels constructed by performing a logical OR operation on pels read from both the source bit map in system memory and the destination bit map in video memory. This transfer is an example of a transfer of information that requires a read and write on the I/O bus.

With reference now to **Figure 5**, a flowchart of a known process for carrying out raster operations is illustrated. This known process begins by reading a pel from system memory (step 500). This pel is part of a

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Docket No. AT9-99-287

system memory. Of course, other blocks of pels may be read from system memory depending on the implementation. Next, one line is read from video memory (step 602). This line is a scan line that is part of a destination  
5 bit map in the video memory associated with the video adapter. This particular step requires a transfer across the bus. Thereafter, a raster operation is performed on all of the pels in the line (step 604). In the depicted example, this raster operation may be a logical OR. This  
10 operation is performed on data stored within the system memory. Thereafter, the line is written to the video memory (step 606). This step requires a transfer in the opposite direction across the bus. Thereafter, a determination is made as to whether more scan lines are  
15 present in the bit map for processing. If additional scan lines are present, the process returns (step 600) to read a line from the system memory. Otherwise, the process terminates. As can be seen, this process reduces the number of bus delays by batching the accesses to the  
20 video memory as compared to the process illustrated in Figure 5.

With reference now to Figure 7, a flowchart of a process for performing raster operations is depicted in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present  
25 invention. In Figure 7, the processes illustrated reduce the number of changes in direction in the bus even though pels are individually written back to the video memory after being processed. Figure 7 shows a process in which the writing of pels to video memory can be performed one  
30 pel at a time without performance degradation as long as reads are not interleaved with writes.

Docket No. AT9-99-287

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The process begins by reading one line from system memory (step 700). Thereafter, one line is read from video memory (step 702). Thereafter, a raster operation is performed on one pel (step 704). Thereafter, the resulting pel is written to video memory (step 706). A determination is then made as to whether more pels are present in the line (step 708). If more pels are present, then the next unprocessed pel is selected for processing (step 710), with the process then returning to step 704 as described above. Otherwise, a determination is made as to whether more lines are present in the bit map (step 712). If more lines are present, then the next unprocessed line is selected for processing (step 714), with the process then returning to step 700 to read that line from system memory. If additional lines are not present in the bit map for processing, the process then terminates. In this particular example, the raster operations are performed one pel at a time with each pel then being written back to the video memory. Performance hits, however, resulting from reads and writes are not incurred here as with the presently known processes. This lack of performance degradation occurs because an entire line of pels are written from the video memory over to the system memory for processing. The pels are then written back to the video memory one at a time, but a change in direction is not required for each raster operation.

Therefore, the present invention provides an improved method, apparatus, and instructions for performing raster operations, which avoid the severe performance problems experienced with the overhead of



Docket No. AT9-99-287

repeatedly switching the video bus from input to output and back. The present invention provides this advantage through video accesses being grouped into batches of entirely input or entirely output operations. As a  
5 result, the number of delays encountered by waiting for the bus to change directions is minimized. By batching the input and output on each line, video performance may be doubled. Although the example in **Figure 7** shows the batching of reads, the same mechanism may be performed  
10 for the batching of writes.

It is important to note that while the present invention has been described in the context of a fully functioning data processing system, those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the processes of  
15 the present invention are capable of being distributed in the form of a computer readable medium of instructions and a variety of forms and that the present invention applies equally regardless of the particular type of signal bearing media actually used to carry out the  
20 distribution. Examples of computer readable media include recordable-type media such a floppy disc, a hard disk drive, a RAM, and CD-ROMs and transmission-type media such as digital and analog communications links.

The description of the present invention has been  
25 presented for purposes of illustration and description, but is not intended to be exhaustive or limited to the invention in the form disclosed. Many modifications and variations will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. For example, although the depicted examples  
30 illustrate the processes being embodied within a graphics engine in a graphical subsystem, these process may be implemented in other locations in the operating system.

Docket No. AT9-99-287

For example, the processes also may be implemented within a device driver, such as video driver 308 in **Figure 3**.

The embodiment was chosen and described in order to best explain the principles of the invention, the practical  
5 application, and to enable others of ordinary skill in the art to understand the invention for various embodiment with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated.

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